

Exploring the Roots of Liberalism

Key Skill:

Understanding cause and effect relationships and the historical significance of changes and events

Key Terms and Concepts:

- Adam Smith
- capitalism
- class system
- classical liberalism
- distribution of wealth
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy
- John Stuart Mill
- laissez-faire capitalism
- liberal democracy
- liberalism
- limited government
- mercantilism
- modern liberalism
- monopoly
- rule of law
- supply and demand

Key Issue:

To what extent should we embrace an ideology?

Related Issue:

Is resistance to liberalism justified?

Chapter Issue:

To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?

Question for Inquiry #1:

In what ways have Aboriginal peoples contributed to the early development of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #2:

What are the origins of liberal thought in Western societies?

In 1886, the people of France gave the people of the United States the Statue of Liberty to mark the success of the American government as a working example of democratic principles in action. Through over a hundred years of revolution, civil war, and protest, by the beginning of the 20th century the American people had developed a government that guaranteed many individual rights and freedoms.

As you learned in Chapters 2 and 3, people have not always had extensive rights and freedoms. At various times in the past, different groups of people around the world have expressed their belief in the importance of individual rights and freedoms, or liberty. This belief began to shape political and economic ideas in many countries, where governments began to practise new democratic understandings, for example, by electing representatives and expanding individual rights and freedoms. These early movements helped to develop the ideology of **liberalism** and to secure some of the rights and freedoms you enjoy today.

Chapter Issue:

To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?

As you will see throughout Part 2 of this book, liberalism has grown and changed over time to include new ideas. In this chapter, you will explore some Aboriginal ideas and values that may have influenced the development of liberal ideas in North America. You will also explore the economic ideas of Adam Smith (1723–1790) and the political ideas of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), which were key to the development of classical liberalism in Western societies. Through your exploration of the roots of liberalism, you will gain the tools you need to address the Chapter Issue: *To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?*



▲ **Figure 4-1** The Statue of Liberty was given to the people of the United States in 1886 by the people of France in recognition of a friendship established during the American Revolution (1775–1783). Today, many people around the world consider the Statue of Liberty a universal symbol of individual freedom and democracy.

Aboriginal Peoples and the Early Development of Liberalism

Question for Inquiry

1. In what ways have Aboriginal peoples contributed to the early development of liberalism?

In this section ...



Figure 4-2 A cluster of arrows represents the unity of the Haudenosaunee people (formerly five First Nations but later six with the addition of the Tuscarora nation). Each arrow is unique, representing one nation of the Confederacy. The arrows symbolize the strength of each nation individually, and the greater strength of all the nations collectively. One arrow by itself can easily be broken, but together they are too strong to break.



Like many ideologies, liberalism has shifted and grown in response to changing historical conditions. However, some key values of liberalism resurface again and again; for example, the importance of the rights and freedoms of the individual and the idea that people have the right to decide who leads them. In this section, you will explore some of the key values of the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy** and its constitution, the **Great Law of Peace**, and consider to what extent these values may have contributed to the origins of liberalism in the United States and in Canada.



Figure 4-3 The traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy spread across what is today northern New York, parts of southern Québec and Ontario, and northern parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio. Today, some members of the Six Nations live in smaller portions of these lands in northern New York and southern Québec and Ontario.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy (also known as the Iroquois Confederacy) was formed between 1400 and 1600. It began as an alliance of the following five Haudenosaunee nations:

- Kanien'kehá:ka (the Mohawk)
- Onenioté'á:ka (the Oneida)
- Ononta'kehá:ka (the Onondaga)
- Kaion'kehá:ka (the Cayuga)
- Shotinontowane'á:ka (the Seneca)

Later, a sixth nation joined: the Tehatiskaró:ros (the Tuscarora).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is often referred to as one of the first and longest lasting participatory democracies in the world. Each nation of the Confederacy has its own council and chief, who are selected by the Clan Mother and address each nation's internal affairs. The Grand Council deals with issues that affect all the nations in the confederacy. All chiefs of the Confederacy are equal in rank and authority. As members of the Confederacy, all nations of the Haudenosaunee share a common goal: to live in harmony.

In contrast, at the time of first contact between Europeans and First Nations peoples, most societies in Europe did not practise democracy or social equality. For them, power and the right to rule were exclusive to royalty, nobility, and the Church. The role of the citizen was to follow the laws established by their rulers.

The Great Law of Peace

The Great Law of Peace is the constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which has been passed orally from generation to generation. Originally, it outlined the path to harmony and unity among the warring nations, divided powers between different levels of government, and established the equal participation of the people, including women, in the government. It guaranteed certain rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the rights of the individual.

The Great Law of Peace guides all aspects of governance and society. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy shares the following thoughts about its constitution:

Outlined in the Great Law, also known as Gayanashagowa or The Great Binding Law, are many of the teachings provided by the Peacemaker. Within the text are three main principles which stand out to govern the rest: peace, power and righteousness [being virtuous or moral]. Each principle depends on the other to support the framework of the constitution. The peace element signifies one's own peace and being of a good mind and the ability to use our minds to negotiate rather than going to war. This peace allows one the good mind needed for the next principle, power... The main idea is that peace is the overall will of the Creator and using the tools of peace, power and righteousness it can be attained.

—Source: “Main Principles.” The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/mainprinciples.html>.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Why do you think the Haudenosaunee Confederacy emphasize these three principles? To what extent do these principles reflect your own beliefs and values?

READING GUIDE

To help you consider historical change, use the following questions to evaluate relationships among ideas:

- How would you define your understanding of the historical event or change?
- Who are the people involved and what are their perspectives on the historical event or change?
- What are the causes and effects of the historical event or change? Consider both the past and the present.
- To what extent are the effects significant for a large group of people or society? Consider both the past and the present.

The Influence of the Haudenosaunee

It has been argued by historians and researchers that some of the ideas and values expressed in the Great Law of Peace may have influenced the writers of the American Constitution in 1787, which in turn would influence the Canadian Fathers of Confederation 80 years later.

Some historians say that the men who wrote the American Constitution, in particular Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, had a great deal of contact with the Haudenosaunee people and expressed their admiration for Haudenosaunee society. They also cite important similarities between the American Constitution and the Great Law of Peace, such as the ideas of elected leaders, of leadership on the basis of merit, of living by the rules that are set out in a shared constitution, and of the concept of equality.

Some historians disagree with the evidence provided and feel that the main influences on the American framers of the constitution were European.



The Influence of the Haudenosaunee

The following excerpts express various opinions about the extent to which the Great Law of Peace and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy may have influenced some of the ideas and values reflected in the American and Canadian constitutions and societies.

"I'm fairly certain that the structure of the United States government descends from a confederacy...I don't think it's an accident that the first proposal for a government for the colonies looks strikingly like the structure of the Confederacy of the Six Nations of the Iroquois, even down to the number of representatives and what their powers and limitations would be and all that. It's impossible to imagine that all of those could be coincidences. It seems as though the Americans were watching, especially Benjamin Franklin, who took a big interest in the Indians."

— **John Mohawk (Seneca leader, scholar, and spokesperson for the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy),** quoted in **"Haudenosaunee Culture: The Great Law as a Model for US Democracy."** *Warrior in Two Worlds*, <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/content/modules/great.pdf>.

On June 11, 1776 while the question of independence was being debated, the visiting Iroquois chiefs were formally invited into the meeting hall of the Continental Congress. There a speech was delivered, in which they were addressed as "Brothers" and told of the delegates' wish that the "friendship" between them would "continue as long as the sun shall shine" and the "waters run." The speech also expressed the hope that the new Americans and the Iroquois act "as one people, and have but one heart." ... With the Iroquois chiefs inside the halls of Congress on the eve of American Independence, the impact of Iroquois ideas on the founders is unmistakable.

— **Donald A. Grinde, Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty, Native America and the Evolution of Democracy*, Chapter 8 (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, 1991),** http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/6Nations/index.html.

Canada, too, has a tradition of participatory governance, one especially enshrined [believed to be important] in the history of our First Nations...Some believe the origin of the Iroquois Confederacy goes as far back as the 12th century, although it certainly goes back at least to the 15th. Tribes would choose a peace chief, a war chief and a council of elders. Women did not get the vote in Canada until 1918, but the Iroquois were a matriarchal society, with women choosing the representatives who attended the councils. Representatives of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy even attended the congress of 1776 in Philadelphia, where they exchanged ideas on governance with Benjamin Franklin.

— **Tom Axworthy (chair of the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Queen's University), "How our democracy evolved."** *The Kingston Whig Standard*, September 27, 2008, http://www.queensu.ca/sps/publications/op_ed/20080927-Axworthy.pdf.



▲ **Figure 4-4** An artist's depiction of the meeting between Iroquois chiefs and the founders of the United States of America in 1776.

- 1 According to these sources, in what ways may the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Great Law of Peace have influenced the constitutions of the United States and Canada (for example, some of their ideas, values, basic principles, rights and freedoms, or the concept of participatory democracy)?
To support your response, make a list of evidence that you believe most strongly supports this belief.

Summary

Centuries ago, when most European peoples had few freedoms and individual rights, the people of the nations of the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy** had the freedom to decide who would lead them and how they would live together. The Haudenosaunee **Great Law of Peace** and its three guiding principles—peace, power, and righteousness—are based on collective values but also contain some individualist and liberal values, such as the idea of elected leaders, leadership on the basis of merit, and living by the rules described in a shared constitution. These ideas and values may have also had some influence on the American and Canadian constitutions, thereby helping to shape North American understandings of **liberalism**. Based on what you have learned in this section, how might you answer the Chapter Issue: *To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?*

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1

From your point of view, what is the strongest evidence of the link between Aboriginal ideas and the development of liberal thought in North America? Explain your answer.
- 2

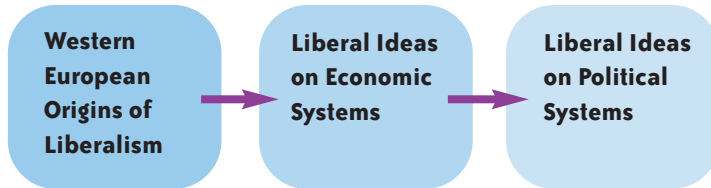
What are the basic ideas and values of the Great Law of Peace, the constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy? How do these ideas and values relate to the importance of individual freedom, which is a central idea of liberalism?

Origins of Western Democratic Liberalism

Question for Inquiry

2. What are the origins of liberal thought in Western societies?

In this section ...



◀ **Figure 4-5** This painting shows a reception at Versailles by King Louis XIV of France. What does it say about the power and position of the king in France during the early 1700s?

During the 1700s and 1800s, the royal families of Europe enjoyed absolute power and wealth. The common people did not have the same freedoms that you have as a person living in Canada in the 21st century. Most were not allowed to own land or the homes they lived in, or to travel within their own countries without permission. Many lived enslaved, restricted from learning how to read or write. Can you imagine what it might be like to live without these freedoms?

Western European Origins of Liberalism

Many liberal ideas that have come to shape aspects of the modern Western world, including the community that you live in, emerged in Europe

hundreds of years ago. These liberal ideas, such as equality and individual freedoms, began as challenges to the existing structures of European society by the early 1800s.

During the 1700s, European countries such as Spain and France were absolute monarchies. This means that the king and his court had complete power over the government. If they did not want to make changes, for example, to allow commoners individual freedoms, they did not have to—even if the majority of citizens wanted the changes. Absolute power in these monarchies was often abused and used to restrict an individual's freedom of speech, freedom to travel, and freedom to own private property. Without these freedoms, most people were unable to determine their own destiny or improve the poor conditions in which they lived.

By the mid-1700s and through the 1800s, many people across Europe began to challenge the absolute monarchies and propose changes. Among those whose ideas challenged the absolute monarchy in France, for example, was the writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau proposed that society should ensure civil rights and freedoms for individuals. It was in the early 1800s that the term *liberal* was first used to describe those who supported the freedom, or liberty, of the individual.

While exploring the Western European origins of liberalism, consider that many people who believed in liberalism during this time believed that

- individual freedoms and rights should be protected
- nobody should be above the law
- what is good for individuals within a community can also be good for the community as a whole
- most individuals, if left alone, will make good decisions for themselves as well as for their communities
- government intervention should be limited so as to allow individuals as much freedom of choice about their lives as possible
- individuals and companies should be allowed to create, market, purchase, and sell products with a minimum of government intervention (a free-market economy)

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What were significant causes and consequences of the Industrial Revolution? How important was this event at the time, and how much does it still influence liberal democracies today?

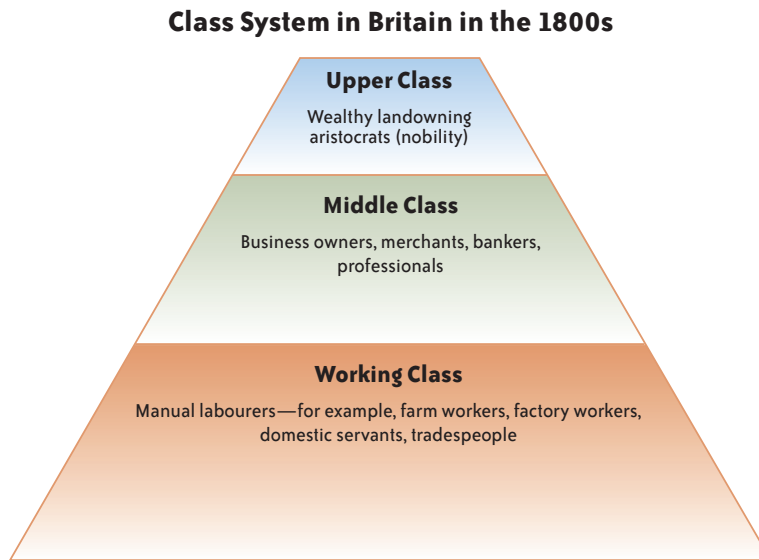
Liberal Ideas on Economic Systems

During the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s in Western Europe, the Industrial Revolution challenged almost everything about the way people lived. Industrialization changed the way people grew food, where people lived, how people worked, and how people made and spent money. The Industrial Revolution got people thinking differently about how an economy should operate.

For many years, much of Europe had an economic system called **mercantilism**, which is based on the idea that countries need to export more than they import. In other words, countries need to sell more than they buy. Think of it in terms of a paycheck. If you spend less than you earn every month, then you will have extra money left over. In a

mercantilist system, a large number of workers are needed to do the labour, but almost all the profits (in gold and silver) are kept by the government. As a result, government leaders (usually kings and queens) lived in luxury, but workers lived in poor conditions.

The **class system** in Great Britain was also a factor in limiting the equal **distribution of wealth**. The British class system tended to keep people in the same social class as their parents, thus limiting their potential for economic advancement. For instance, if your father had been of the working class, you would have had a very difficult time rising to the middle or upper classes.



◀ **Figure 4-6** Before the Industrial Revolution, British society was divided into three classes: a small number of wealthy, landowning aristocrats; a slightly larger middle class; and the vast majority of the population, who were labourers. During the mid-1800s, the middle class grew and some of the “nouveau riche” (new rich) became as wealthy as or wealthier than members of the upper class. In fact, money began to replace land as a source of status.

Adam Smith and The Wealth of Nations

In his book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), **Adam Smith** challenged the key ideas behind the mercantilist system. One of the criticisms that Smith had about mercantilism is that it did not distribute wealth *throughout* society very well. A fairer distribution of wealth would come only if people had more say in what they made, how they made it, and for what price they sold it.

Another one of Smith’s criticisms of mercantilism is that the government leaders (kings and queens) usually played favourites with business owners and landowners. For example, certain business owners and landowners were given the exclusive right to extract raw materials or produce goods. This resulted in the creation of **monopolies**, where only one or two companies were allowed to make a product. Monopolies in turn created a lack of competition, which would often result in a poor product. Some business owners felt that they did not have to improve their products if they were the only ones selling them. Smith believed competition to be a very important part of an economy as it encourages us to become better, stronger, faster, and smarter.

According to Smith, if people were free to compete, it would be in their self-interest to improve, as those who are better, stronger, faster, and smarter will sell more products and services. Competition and self-interest motivate factory owners, small-business owners, and farmers to make better products so that more people buy their products than those made by others. The consumers get better products, and the owners and landowners make more money. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith proposes that the individual or company's pursuit of self-interest is guided by an "invisible hand" to unintentionally improve the prosperity and well-being of society as a whole.

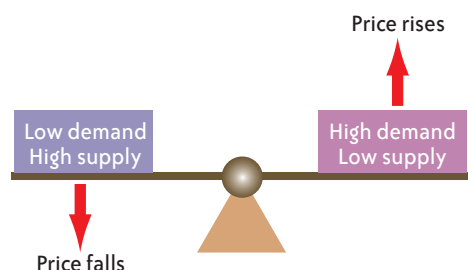
Figure 4-7



Business owners pursue profits due to their greed, self-interest, and competition with others.



More jobs are created and the economy improves, benefiting society as a whole.



▲ **Figure 4-8** At the time Smith was writing, some people's wages were set by their workers' association, known as a guild. Rather than setting wages artificially, Smith argued that wages, like the price of goods, should be determined by the forces of supply and demand. The theory of **supply and demand** says that when demand for something increases—for example, a product or a skill—the price goes up. But if there is a surplus of that product or skill, demand goes down and the price goes down as well.

For the forces of self-interest, competition, and the invisible hand to work, people must be allowed to act freely; therefore, Smith was against government intervention in the economy. That means that he was against such things as government restricting trade within a country or between countries, government-assigned monopolies, and the misuse of public funds. It is important to note, however, that Smith did not argue for the absence of government. Smith believed in the necessity of a **limited government**. He believed that governments were necessary to protect the security of the individual. This meant that the government was to enforce laws that protected the individual and his or her property from harm. The government was also responsible for maintaining public works (such things as roads and bridges).

Smith believed that if people were allowed to act freely in the economy, they would be able to improve their lives. He believed that individuals should be allowed to improve their lives based on the merit of their work rather than be stuck with whatever lives they were born into. He also felt that self-improvement is a great way to motivate people to work harder and ultimately improve the economy. This type of economic system, in which individuals are rewarded based on their abilities and hard work, is sometimes referred to as a **meritocracy**.

Capitalism and Liberalism

Due to the ideas of liberal economists such as Adam Smith, as well as the development of new technologies during the Industrial Revolution (for example, steam power, factory production, and the expansion of the iron industry), economic systems around the world began to evolve and change. During this time, economies changed from the old mercantile system to economic liberalism.

Economic expressions of liberalism, in which consumers and producers have the individual freedom to make economic choices for themselves, is also known as **capitalism**. In a capitalist system, every individual is free to sell his or her labour to employers; in other words, individuals profit directly from their own work. The role of the government is to protect the individual's private property and other rights. It is not to interfere in the trade of goods and labour.

Mercantilism	Capitalism
• Government regulation of business	• Little or no government regulation of business
• Monopolies	• Competition
• Accumulation of wealth by a few people in society	• Distribution of wealth across a wider range of society

◀ **Figure 4-9** It can be said that the evolution of mercantilism to capitalism is one of the founding events of liberalism. Today, many developed countries have moved beyond pure capitalism to allow, once again, for some government regulation of business. Why do you suppose this has happened?



Figure 4-10



Figure 4-11

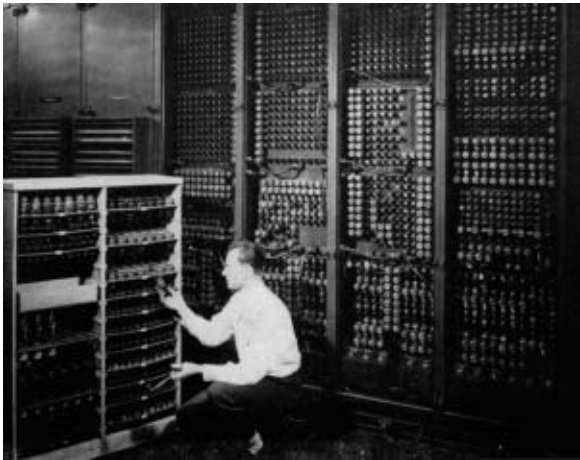


Figure 4-12

▲ **Figures 4-10, 4-11, 4-12** Liberal values associated with capitalism, such as a focus on individualism, have led people to innovate and improve. Think of all the inventions that have happened in the past 150 years and how much we have gained from having them. How might your life be different if the personal computer had not been invented? Would we have such things as cellphones, the Internet, or life-saving machines?

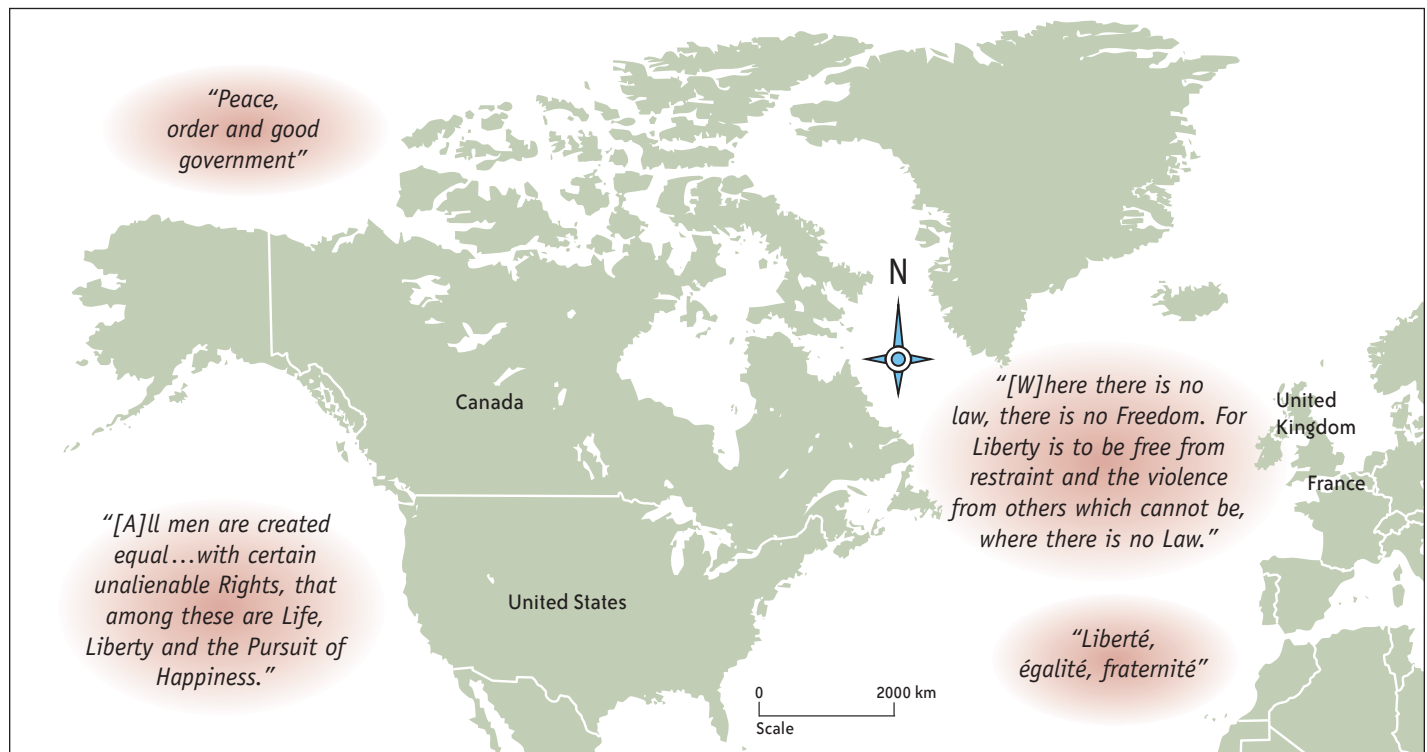
Many economic liberals during the Industrial Revolution believed (and some still believe) that government intervention upsets the natural cycle of business: for a time the economy is good (a boom), then it declines (a bust), and then it improves again, and so on. French economists referred to this absence of government control as **laissez-faire capitalism**, which means the government keeps its hands off many decisions about the economy and “lets it be.”

Liberal economic writers, such as Smith, were part of a movement that is now known as classical liberalism. **Classical liberalism** was based on the writings of philosophers dating back to the 1600s (for example, John Locke), all of whom regarded the rights and freedoms of individuals as the most important part of society. Classical liberals tended to focus mainly on freedom in the economic system—the freedoms of business owners—however, and did not worry too much about the freedoms and rights of ordinary citizens.

Liberal Ideas on Political Systems

During the European Renaissance (14th to 17th century), and especially in 18th-century Europe, a new focus on the individual developed. This recognition of the worth of the individual was key to the development of liberalism. The political influence of this new individualism can be seen in the events of the late 1700s: the American Revolution against the British monarchy and the French Revolution, where people rose up against the French monarchy. In the founding constitutions of the United States of America and the French Republic, and other documents such as the Declaration or Bill of Rights, key political values of liberalism were expressed. These new democracies embraced ideas of philosophers such as John Locke, who suggested that people should enjoy the rights to life, liberty, and property. Some essential rights and freedoms on which these new governments were founded include the following:

- to be allowed to participate in government
- to be free from excessive government intrusion into one's life
- to be assured that no one (especially the king and the nobility) is above the law (that is, the **rule of law**)
- to be protected and permitted to exercise individual rights
- to be free to make decisions on one's own behalf



▲ **Figure 4-13** The United States, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom are all considered liberal democracies. For each of these countries, particular phrases are associated with their ideas about government. How does each statement represent a political expression of liberal ideas and values about rights and freedoms?

These new governments were the beginnings of what would become liberal democracies, and people across Europe fought throughout the 1800s to establish some form of liberal democracy to replace what they saw as unjust monarchies. A **liberal democracy** is a political system that is based on the equality of all citizens and that has free elections, multiple political parties, political decisions that are made through a democratically elected legislature, and legal decisions that are made by an independent judiciary. Over time, the values of individualism came to be expressed in many ways in liberal democracies around the world.

John Stuart Mill

It is generally accepted that **John Stuart Mill's** essay *On Liberty* is one of the most important contributions to the origins of liberal thought. *On Liberty* was published in 1859, during the time of the Industrial Revolution. In it, Mill attempts to prove the benefits of allowing as many individual rights as possible by limiting the role of the government. Mill believed, as other classical liberals did, that the role of government was to do only three things: preserve the rule of law, protect private property, and ensure the security of the individual.

That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others...Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

—Source: **John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), pp. 68–69.**

Classical liberals such as Mill could not justify laws that restricted individual choice and freedom because of what *might be*. These kinds of laws try to prevent action *before* it happens. They are based on an assumption that something bad will happen. But what if nothing bad happens? Mill did not believe that the possibility of something bad happening was reason enough to restrict individual rights. He believed that although a government can try to persuade citizens to follow a certain path, it cannot force them to do so by law. According to Mill, the individual must have the ability to make his or her own choice. This idea of individual freedom and choice is essential to liberalism.

Freedom of Speech

In keeping with his respect of individual rights, Mill warned governments and societies in general of the danger of promoting the mass mind, or one acceptable way of thinking, and instead advocated for the freedom of speech. The mass mind is one that is intolerant to individual voices that may disagree with the established ideas of the time.



PAUSE AND REFLECT

Mill believed that every individual should be as free as possible, so long as an individual's actions do not harm anyone else. Do you think this is a reasonable guide for limiting the power of governments?

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

—Source: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 76.

Mill believed that it was more dangerous to society to silence the individual from speaking than it was to allow him or her to express a controversial or perhaps offensive opinion. This is because that one dissenting voice or controversial opinion could be necessary in proving or disproving established beliefs. In that way, the dissenting or opposing voice could be the key to changing society for the better.



Freedom or Safety?

Mill did not believe that laws should restrict your freedoms based on the possibility that something bad could happen. Some of the laws in Alberta today limit your freedoms to protect your safety. Read the following article on helmet laws and respond to the questions.

Doctor says helmet may have saved teen's life

The Calgary Herald, June 11, 2001

by Robert Walker

A 16-year-old cyclist's life was saved by his helmet Sunday morning after a van drove over his head on Lower Springbank Road west of Calgary, says a city brain surgeon. Dr. John Hurlbert, who has campaigned for a compulsory bicycle helmet law in Alberta, said the teen, who is in critical but stable condition at Foothills Hospital intensive care unit, could pull through as a result of having some protection for his head. "This just underlines the need for mandatory helmet use," said Hurlbert.

Calgary Cross MLA Yvonne Fritz plans to introduce a bill requiring bike helmets be worn as a way to deal with a problem health-care professionals say is one of the biggest preventable causes of injury. The idea is strongly endorsed by Hurlbert, who says the vast majority of cycling-related head injuries don't have to happen...

"I am 100 per cent behind this law," he said. "We have statistics, we have scientific evidence; everything points to helmets being protective. It's really a no-brainer. The problem is just getting people to wear them."

—Source: Robert Walker,
"Doctor says helmet may have saved teen's life."
The Calgary Herald, June 11, 2001,
<http://www.magma.ca/~ocbc/alberta.html>.



▲ **Figure 4-14** For cyclists under 18 years of age, wearing a helmet became a law in Alberta in 2002.

- 1 How might Mill respond to a law like this one?
- 2 Do you think the helmet law is necessary? To what extent should the government have the right to restrict your actions as an individual?
- 3 Can you understand some of the reasons why the Alberta government would introduce a helmet law?

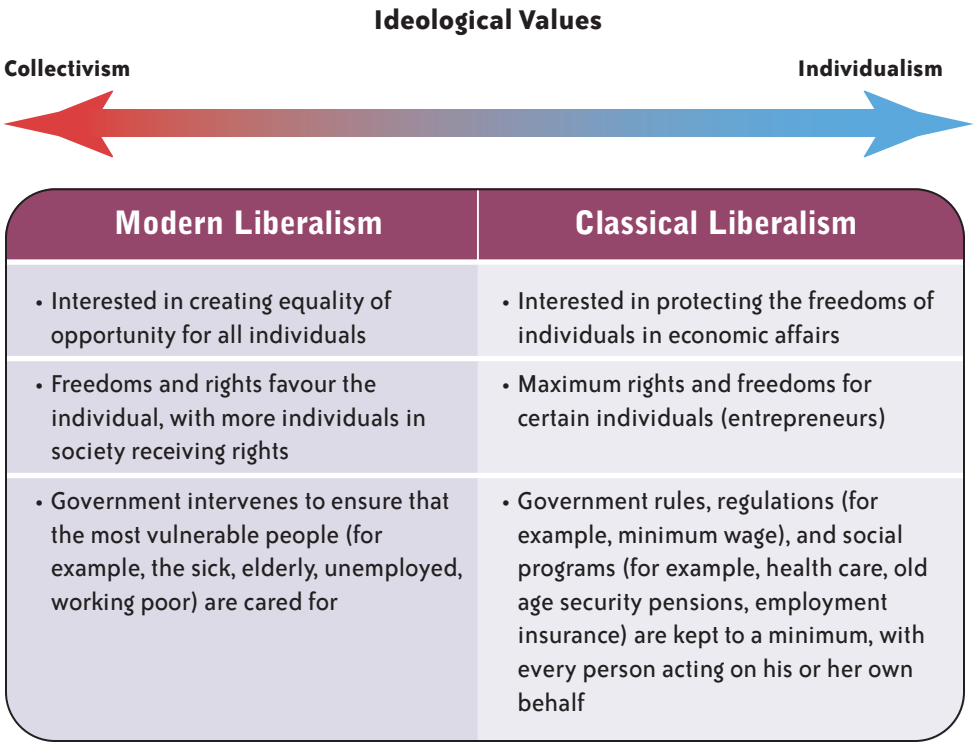
Mill firmly believed in the freedom of speech for all, including women. He believed that a government silencing a voice was more dangerous to society than hearing offensive or untrue speech. From your point of view, is there any type of speech that need not be voiced? Is there any type of expression of which you would support a government ban?

Throughout your life, you will likely encounter some ideas that are not in keeping with your way of thinking. Sometimes you may find yourself in a debate or argument with someone who has ideas that are not only contrary to yours, but also offensive to you. How would you handle such a situation? How would you expect a government to handle an idea or set of ideas that are contrary to its ideological principles?

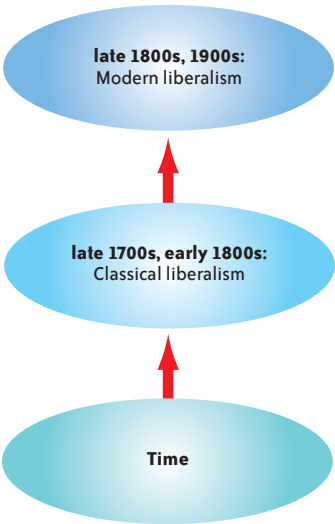
The Beginnings of Modern Liberalism

While classical liberalism was concerned with granting economic freedoms to business owners in a market system, **modern liberalism** developed over time to address concerns with the inequality created by laissez-faire capitalist society. Although people were free to participate in the economy, many still lived in poverty. Some began to ask such questions as the following:

- Can someone who must work long hours for little pay just to survive truly be considered free?
- Is it fair that children who are poor are exploited by business owners, even though the children may choose to work?
- Are all people really equal when some (for example, women and visible minorities) do not have the same rights, such as the right to vote?
- Should not all individuals have the right to an education?



◀ **Figure 4-15** In many ways, the values of modern liberalism differ from the values of classical liberalism. Although each of these sets of beliefs and values is rooted in individualism, they interpret individualism and how to best achieve the common good in different ways.



▲ **Figure 4-16** Liberalism is an ideology based on the values of individualism that has evolved over time. These values are still present today in different ways in Western societies.

By the turn of the 20th century, some people began proposing changes to the laws to ensure that all people had the same rights and freedoms, for example, by giving all adult citizens the right to vote. Some also felt that the government had a responsibility to ensure that all people have the same opportunities, regardless of their skin colour, gender, or economic background. The development of both classical liberalism and modern liberalism will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary

The Western European origins of **liberalism** trace their roots back to significant events. The Renaissance period (14th to 17th century) in Europe saw the emergence of a modern spirit of individualism, which is a central characteristic of liberalism. By the end of the 18th century, revolutions had taken place in America and in France to establish governments based on liberal values of freedom and democracy. The Industrial Revolution during the late 18th and early 19th century in western Europe and North America transformed economic systems. **Classical liberal** values led to **laissez-faire capitalism**, as described by Adam Smith. Later, during the mid-19th century, John Stuart Mill advanced Smith's ideas into the political and social realms, and moved them toward what would come to be known as **modern liberalism**. These key events provide insight into the Chapter Issue: *To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?*

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Write working definitions or understandings in your own words for *mercantilism*, *classical liberalism*, *capitalism*, and *modern liberalism*.
- 2 In a chart or diagram, summarize the key similarities and differences between the ideas of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. In a couple of sentences, describe how each of these men has applied the values of individualism to economic or political systems.

Classical Liberal Values and Rent Control

Something to Think About:

Should Western liberal democracies be allowed to intervene in the economy and set limits on how much citizens can be charged for rent by property owners?

An Example:

The issue of rent control and to what extent it is appropriate for governments to intervene has been debated by citizens, governments, and economists a great deal over the years. Do citizens have a right to affordable housing and is this a part of their safety and security in society? Does guaranteeing a citizen's individual right to private property contribute to the common good because everyone should have the same opportunity to succeed? To help you consider some possible points of view regarding the issue of rent control, please read the two contemporary excerpts below and consider how you believe Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill might have responded to this issue.

Why Rent Control Is Immoral

by Michael S. Berliner

In a free society, no government (local, state, or federal) has the right to interfere with the choices of people to do business with each other. It should no more tell a landlord what price to offer than it should tell a prospective tenant how much he can spend on rent. Both the landlord and the tenant have the moral right to "just say no" to the other's offer. That's freedom...

[L]andlords have no divine right to a customer or to certain levels of rent (they're free to lower their offers or invest their money elsewhere), and tenants have no right to demand housing (they're free to seek alternative housing).

—Michael S. Berliner, "Why Rent Control Is Immoral." Ayn Rand Institute,

http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_rent_control.

Big city support for rent control

92 per cent of tenants, 78 per cent of home owners want Tories to act

The Calgary Herald, May 15, 2007

by Kelly Cryderman

A new poll finds that a majority of Albertans in the province's two largest cities overwhelmingly support rent controls, which have been rejected by the Tory government.

An Ipsos-Reid survey provided exclusively to the Herald Monday found 78 per cent of home owners and 92 per cent of renters in Calgary and Edmonton support having government limits to rent increases.

"Some landlords are gouging and that's not fair," said Calgarian Daniel Johnson, 60, who recently received notice that rent for his one-bedroom apartment is jumping to \$1,075 from \$575. He said although he understands that there needs to be moderate housing price increases, he strongly supports rent controls.

"Renters are citizens just like everybody else and they are afforded no rights under the current system," said Johnson, who is working to establish a tenants group in Calgary. "If there was balance throughout it would be better."

The poll comes after months of increasing rents in the two cities, with numerous tales of hikes in the hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month. Landlords have pointed out that rental rates in Alberta were stagnant for five years before the real housing crunch hit the province in 2006, while tenants say they are now vulnerable to unpredictable and unaffordable rent hikes.

The government has rejected the temporary controls recommended by a government-appointed housing task force in favour of limiting the allowed frequency of rent increases to once per year.

—Source: Kelly Cryderman, "Big city support for rent control."
The Calgary Herald, May 15, 2007,

<http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=d3c92315-9817-4599-abea-c5a024b9a803&k=9449&p=1>).



▲ **Figure 4-17** Daniel Johnson, an advocate of rent control, has been forced to move because of increases to his rent.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 What points of view regarding rent control are expressed in the two sources? What evidence does each source provide to support its argument? Are there any similarities or differences between each of these arguments and classical liberal values? Explain your answer.
- 2 Based on your understandings from this chapter, how do you believe Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill might respond to the issue of rent control? Support your answer with evidence from the chapter.
- 3 Can you think of any additional arguments that could be made for or against rent control? Based on your values and understandings of liberalism and the economy thus far, how would you respond to the following question: Should government place limits on the amount of rent charged by property owners?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1 Review the material within this chapter. Respond to the following questions: To what extent did Aboriginal ideas contribute to the development of liberal thought in North America? Write a short response that compares and contrasts these contributions.
- 2 As a class activity, take part in a class discussion to compare and contrast clauses of Canada's Constitution Act of 1982 and the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.
- 3 In small groups, create murals that illustrate and describe with slogans and keywords the ideas, values, and events that influenced the origins of classical liberalism in Western societies. When selecting the content of your mural, consider the historical significance of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the ideas of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill.
- 4 With a group, discuss one of the following questions:
 - What values of classical liberalism are still visible in the economy and politics of modern-day Canada?
 - How do classical liberalism and modern liberalism provide different interpretations of individualism?
 - What do you see as the next evolution in liberalism? Is there something beyond modern liberalism? What would the best possible set of values be for a society based on individualism today?
 - Have one group member take notes of the key points of your discussion. When your discussion time is up, have another group member summarize your group's ideas based on the notes. Have a different group member then present the summary to the rest of the class.
- 5 Consider the aspects of classical liberalism that make it an ideology, and list them. Create a political public service announcement in which you try to encourage citizens to embrace classical liberalism. Include in your announcement or advertisement a reference to a significant historical event that you believe will best support your message about classical liberalism. Perform your announcement in front of a small group or the class. You may wish to work with a partner.
- 6 There have been many contributors to classical liberalism whose ideas and values have had lasting significance over time. Using the Internet, do some research on a classical liberal thinker. Create a short biography card—much like a hockey card—for this classical liberal thinker. You should include a portrait or photograph of the person on one side of the card and biographical information, such as place of birth, occupation, and important publications, on the other. Also research and explain in your own words at least one idea that links this person with classical liberal thought and identifies the historical significance of his or her contribution. You may wish to refer to the Reading Guide on page 98 to help you evaluate the historical significance of this person's contributions.
- 7 To what extent have you embraced the values of classical liberalism? Write a personal response to this question. As a part of your response, identify the values of classical liberalism with which you identify the most and the least and explain why.

Chapter Summary and Reflection

Throughout this chapter, you explored various contributions to the development of Western democratic **liberalism** and their historical significance. For example, the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy**, often viewed as the oldest participatory democracy, and its constitution, the **Great Law of Peace**, may have influenced American and Canadian ideas about government and democracy. In Europe, the ideas of philosophers such as John Locke and economists and political thinkers such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill focused on the importance of individual rights and freedoms. During the 1700s and 1800s, governments across Europe began to change from

monarchies based on **mercantilism** to **liberal democracies** based on **capitalism**. **Classical liberal** ideas and values related to economic and political systems gained a great deal of influence in some Western societies.

These observations will help you address the Chapter Issue: *To what extent have various ideas and events shaped liberalism over time?* You may also start to think about whether or not an ideology should be the foundation of a country's identity and to what extent every government, and especially our own governments, should embrace an ideology. What have we, and what have our governments, learned from the development of liberalism?